

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Chichester Bell, February 18, 1901

February 18, 1901. My dear Chester: —

I want some money for scientific purposes — don't you? I am anxious also to make provision for the Volta Bureau so that it can be permanently carried on after I have done with it, without the necessity for an increase in its endowment fund taken from Mabel's property.

Now, the old Volta Laboratory Association comes to my mind. The Volta Prize of \$10,000 was well invested in a laboratory — and produced a hundredfold, so that out of my share I was enabled to found the Volta Bureau, and give an endowment of \$25,000, to the American Association to Promote the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf. The property of the Volta Bureau, including real estate, probably amounts now nearly to \$150,000, but this does not yield income enough to enable us to get the pick of the men engaged in the education of the Deaf to place at its head.

I have established a sinking fund, which increases slowly, but it will take a long time before the funds are sufficient for the purpose intended. So long as our good friend, Mr. Hitz, is alive the Bureau will retain its present proud position — but his life hangs upon a thread, and I do not know what would become of it should he suddenly be taken away. We certainly could not get any man of ability to perform the work that he does for the same 2 compensation, and our funds are not sufficient to pay a first class salary for a first class man.

So now I have determined to ask your help — and I do so the more readily because I think that in helping me you may also be able to help yourself.

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I do not know what your position may be on the other side of the Atlantic — or what work you may have there to engross your thoughts and time, but this I do know that you have a wife and several sweet little children (the wife too, I mean) and that in the natural course of events you may expect to have a still larger family with increased expenses as the others grow up.

I haven't the remotest idea what your income may be, but, judging from my own experience, with only two children, your family will have no difficulty in spending it all however large it may be. I can't imagine, however, that it can be large, in which case the support of your family must be a cause of anxiety to you, and, unless you have some occupation that brings you in a good income, you might feel it to your interest to go into a speculation with me, with the object of making money — to put our BRAINS together for this purpose — as we did in the old Volta Laboratory days.

Neither you nor I will ever again be as young as we are now, 3 and if we do not make this effort now — WE NEVER WILL.

My idea is this. Let us re-open the Volta Laboratory together, you and I — or at all events — enter into a partnership for a limited period of time — sufficient to make a proper experiment — say two years — with a limited amount of capital to pay the expenses — say \$10,000, and see what we can do. While each of us can work upon our own scientific hobbies (which don't pay) let us put our heads together to work upon some subject to be decided upon in the future, that will pay.

This is in crude outline the plan I have in view. But, of course such an indefinite proposition could only lead to correspondence over details — and hence DELAY.

I shall therefore make a specific proposition, which you can accept, modify or reject as seems best to you.

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I will recommend Mabel to place at our disposal for laboratory purposes the sum of \$10,000. Calculated to last us for two years. This gives us \$416.67 per month for two years. I would propose that \$100 per month be allowed you personally and \$100 per month allowed me for our time and services, and that the balance (\$216.67) be at our disposal to defray the expenses of construction of apparatus, including time of workmen. Then let us put our heads together and work at some subject to be agreed upon by 4 us when we meet.

You and I to contribute the ideas, and Mabel the capital to reduce them to practice. The interest in the new Volta Laboratory Association to be divided into three parts; one third to you, one third to me, and one third to Mabel, for her \$10,000. In other words, we sell to Mabel for the sum of \$10,000, a one third interest in whatever inventions we produce — and if we don't produce something of value in two years, we better shut up shop, and recognize that we are too old to be young any more, and that the vigor and energy of our youth has departed for good.

I have a feeling, however, that in spite of our gray hairs we are still nearly in the prime of life, and that if we work together with a definite object in view, keeping each other up to the mark — we will yet be able to make something of benefit to the world and of profit to ourselves.

Shall we try it. What do you say?

Love to Antoinette and all the children,

Yours sincerely, Alexander Graham Bell P. S. I send this letter via Mabel in Paris, so that we may be sure before hand of her hearty co-operation. Mr. Chichester A. Bell, 3 Mansfield Place, Richmond, Surry, England.